



The ecommerce shift to subscriptions

A guide for growth leaders

How subscriptions are reshaping ecommerce

The subscription economy isn't just growing — it's transforming how consumers engage with brands. The ecommerce subscription market is now \$152.8B ([source](#)), whether it's replenishment for essentials, curated discovery boxes, or exclusive access memberships.

For mid-market ecommerce brands, subscriptions unlock more than predictable revenue. They create durable customer relationships, improve lifetime value, and give leaders the data and flexibility to respond to shifting consumer expectations. Our What subscribers want report confirms that **the top reasons people stay subscribed are [convenience, cost savings, and exclusivity](#)** — pillars every subscription strategy should be built on.

Lessons from leading brands



FabFitFun turned recurring deliveries into a lifestyle experience. Their seasonal curation model not only drives surprise and delight, but also extends engagement between shipments with member-only sales, add-ons, and a strong online community. This demonstrates that subscription success is often about building ongoing engagement beyond the box itself.



Scentbird shows the power of consumer-led choice. By giving subscribers control of their monthly fragrance queue, they reduce churn risk tied to lack of variety — one of the biggest complaints uncovered in our What subscribers want survey. Flexibility and personalization are central to their model.



Wyze illustrates how subscriptions can scale new revenue streams. Starting with bundled device + service plans, they gradually added premium tiers and new features. By testing bundles, pricing, and packaging, Wyze proves that subscriptions are not static — they're designed to evolve as consumer needs change.



Seed Health highlights the importance of education and trust. Their probiotic subscription emphasizes long-term health benefits while delivering content that reinforces scientific credibility. They pair that with flexible shipment options, giving subscribers confidence and control — two major drivers of retention.

Best practices and tactics for growth leaders

1. Design subscriptions around customer needs

Every strong subscription model solves a pain point:

- **Discovery** (FabFitFun) – delight through curated experiences.
- **Variety** (Scentbird) – flexibility to try something new each month.
- **Convenience** (Wyze) – simple recurring plans that reduce friction.
- **Outcomes** (Seed Health) – delivering on long-term value, not just a product.

Tactic: Use quick pilots and surveys to validate demand before scaling. A/B test plan structures to see what resonates most with customers.

2. Simplify acquisition and onboarding

According to [Baymard Institute](#), 70.22% of online shopping carts are abandoned.

- Streamline checkout flows and offer popular payment methods.
- Use free trials, limited-time discounts, or free shipping to reduce risk for first-time subscribers.
- Clearly communicate value upfront — don't assume the benefits are obvious.

Example: Seed Health emphasizes health outcomes and control during sign-up, which reassures new customers and makes the commitment feel low-risk.

3. Retention starts on day one

Retention is built into the model, not added later.

- Automate payment recovery with intelligent retries and account updater tools to minimize involuntary churn.
- Personalize engagement with targeted prompts, education, and loyalty perks.
- Keep benefits fresh by layering in new perks or content between shipments.

Example: FabFitFun uses exclusive sales and member content to drive interaction year-round, not just when boxes ship.

Example: Scentbird lowers churn by allowing customers to swap their monthly fragrance — turning what could be a cancellation trigger into a reason to stay.

4. Experiment and adapt continuously

Subscriptions are dynamic. Growth leaders treat them as living products.

- Test pricing, billing cadences (monthly vs. annual), and bundles regularly.
- Introduce tiered plans or add-ons to capture more value from loyal customers.
- Use subscriber data to fuel cross-sell and upsell campaigns.

Example: Wyze tests device + subscription bundles to optimize conversion and expand adoption across product lines. Their willingness to iterate keeps revenue streams growing.

5. Global readiness from the start

As brands scale, they must anticipate international growth:

- Support local currencies and payment methods.
- Ensure tax and compliance readiness in each market.
- Use a platform that can scale globally without creating operational drag.

Example: Seed Health's global customer base benefits from localized payments and compliance support, giving them the ability to expand confidently without friction.


The takeaway

Subscriptions aren't just about recurring revenue — they're about creating long-term value exchanges between brands and customers. For mid-market ecommerce companies, the opportunity is to **start simple, build retention early, and continuously evolve** the model based on data.

Recurly helps brands like FabFitFun, Scentbird, Wyze, and Seed Health launch quickly, optimize continuously, and scale with confidence. With the right tools in place, you can turn subscriptions into a growth engine that drives loyalty, predictability, and expansion into new markets.

Your subscribers are already telling you what they want. The brands that listen — and act — will lead the next era of ecommerce growth.

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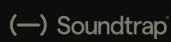
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